



Fighting For Veterans Every Step of the Way

Since January 2007, I have supported legislation that has provided a 70 percent increase in funding for veterans' health care and benefits, over 10,000 new claims processors to reduce VA case backlogs, 3,389 new doctors and 14,316 new nurses, 145 new community-based vet outpatient clinics and 92 new vet centers. This includes \$1 million specifically for improvements to the Donald J. Mitchell VA Outpatient Clinic in Rome, NY.

Congress also passed the historic **Post 9/11 GI Bill**, which restored the promise of a full, four-year college education, allowing up to 2 million veterans of the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan to be part of a new American economic recovery, just like after World War II. Additionally, we extended these crucial college benefits to all children of fallen service members since 9/11.

Legislation I Have Voted For in the 111th Congress:

FY 2010 Defense Authorization Act (H.R. 2647), which includes a 3.4% troop pay raise, strengthens military readiness and military families support, and focuses our strategy in Afghanistan and redeployment from Iraq. *(Signed into Law)*

The Veterans Health Care Budget Reform and Transparency Act (H.R. 1016), a top priority of veterans' groups, authorizing Congress to approve VA medical care appropriations one year in advance to ensure reliable and timely funding and prevent politics from ever delaying VA health care funding. *(Signed into Law)*

The Caregivers and Veterans Omnibus Health Services Act (S.1963), which greatly improves health care services for our 1.8 million women veterans, provides greater access to veterans in rural areas and for the first time provides immediate help to family members and other caregivers of disabled, ill or injured veterans by providing training, counseling and respite care, as well as eliminating copayments for catastrophically disabled veterans. *(Signed into Law)*

FY 2010 Military Construction-VA Appropriations Act, which strengthens quality health care for 5 million veterans by increasing funding for medical care, benefits claims processors, and facility improvements by 11%. *(Signed into Law)*

FY 2009 Supplemental Appropriations Act, which established the Retroactive Stop Loss Special Pay (RSLSP) program, allowing troops whose service was involuntarily extended between 9/11/2001-9/30/2009 to file claims in order to receive \$500 a month (retroactively) in special pay. Also voted to extend program deadline from 10/15/10 to 12/3/10. *(Signed into Law)*

In response to the strong support of myself and other members of Congress for legislation (H.R. 1428), the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) began, and has nearly finished, amending current VA rules to create this presumption for Vietnam veterans that were exposed to Agent Orange and are now suffering from Parkinson's disease, certain forms of leukemia and heart disease, and other conditions. In anticipation of these rules taking effect, Congress included \$13.4 million in additional funding for VA to begin paying these veterans these benefits in the FY 2010 Supplemental Appropriations Act (H.R. 4899). *(Signed into law)*

The American Jobs and Closing Tax Loopholes Act of 2010 (H.R. 4213), which would have ended the Disabled Veterans Tax that unjustly forces disabled military retirees to give up one dollar of their pension for every dollar of disability pay. Many of the veterans who fall into this category were so severely injured during their service that they had to retire and they deserve full retirement and disability benefits. *(Passed House)* Unfortunately, the Senate was unable to pass H.R. 4213 with these provisions included. Rest assured that I will continue to work to end this unfair tax on our veterans.

FY 2011 Defense Authorization (H.R. 5136), which increases hostile fire and imminent danger pay; extends TRICARE dependent coverage up to age 26; and strengthens counterterrorism. *(Passed by House)*

The Honor America's Guard-Reserve Retirees Act (H.R. 3787), which recognizes those who have served our nation for 20 years with the distinction of "veteran." It will not change the qualifications to gain access to extra benefits, but will change the definition of "veteran" by appropriately including those who have served in the Guard and Reserves. *(Passed in House)*

The National Guard Employment Protection Act of 2010 (H.R. 1879), which extends key re-employment rights to those called up for full-time National Guard duty. *(Passed in House)*

The Helping Heroes Keep Their Homes Act of 2010 (H.R. 3976), which extends expiring protections that safeguard veteran homeowners from foreclosure for nine months following deployment. *(Passed in House)*

The Women Veterans Health Care Improvement Act (H.R. 1211), which expands and improves VA services for the 1.8 million women veterans' currently receiving VA health care, by providing child care at some VA locations and concentrating treatment efforts for post-traumatic stress disorder. *(Passed in House)*

The Disabled Military Retiree Relief Act (H.R. 2990), which provides a one-year fix for the Disabled Veterans Tax for disabled military retirees with less than 20 years of service. This bill would allow these service members who have been retired for severe disability to receive both their military retirement and VA disability pay. *(Passed in House)*

Legislation I Have Introduced in the 111th Congress:

I introduced **H.R. 3441**, which would provide automatic enrollment of veterans returning from combat zones into the VA medical system within 45 days of a veteran's respective discharge. Returning veterans should be able to get back to their lives and spend their time with loved ones, not filling out paperwork just to access their benefits.

Legislation I Have Co-Sponsored in the 111th Congress:

The Post-9/11 Veterans Educational Assistance Improvements Act of 2010 (H.R. 5933), which provides more resources and opportunity to veterans who were previously excluded from GI Bill benefits by expanding to include vocational schools, apprenticeships and on-the-job training and granting full GI Bill credit to National Guardsmen responding to national disasters. H.R. 5933 also expands and simplifies the Yellow Ribbon Program for veterans who choose to attend private, graduate or out-of-state schools and provides all student veterans with a 30 percent increase in the monthly living allowance.

The Rating and Processing Individuals' Disability (RAPID) Claims Act (H.R.5549), which codifies the VA's Fully Developed Claims Program and allows a veteran to bypass the lengthy claim development period by submitting a complete claim that needs no further substantiating evidence. Additionally it requires the VA to send all appeals forms out with its correspondence and allows a veteran who plans on submitting a fully developed claim but has not yet gathered all the evidence to file a placeholder claim to protect their award date.

The Veterans Disability Claims Efficiency Act (H.R. 5928), would create a fast-track system within the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to quickly grant initial disability ratings to veterans with straightforward claims. This process will place raters at the beginning of the claims process to assign temporary ratings to injuries that can be adjudicated based on the initial evidence submitted by the veteran.

The Veterans Appeal Improvement and Modernization Act (H.R. 4121), which streamlines the VA disability appeals process by allowing the Board of Veteran Appeals to review rejected claims individually rather than all claims in aggregate.

The Veteran Employment Transition Act (H.R. 5400), which expands and simplify the Work Opportunity Tax Credit by enabling veterans who have been out of work, but did not file for unemployment, to utilize this tax credit, as well as National Guardsmen who have responded to national disasters. Additionally, it would provide servicemen and women with information on how to market themselves to potential employers directly related to the tax credit.

The Reserve Retirement Deployment Credit Correction Act (H.R. 4947), which would eliminate the per-fiscal year calculation of days of certain active duty or active service used to reduce the minimum age at which a member of a reserve component of the uniformed services may retire for non-regular service.

The Education Assistance to Realign New Eligibilities for Dependents (H.R. 3577), which would provide roughly 288,000 military members who retired from active duty with at least 20 years of active service between September 11th, 2001, and August 1st, 2009 the ability to transfer their unused benefits to their dependents

The Military Retirees' Health Care Protection (H.R. 816), which would block increases to TRICARE military health insurance premiums, co-payments for pharmaceuticals, deductibles for inpatient care, and premiums for those in the Reserves and Guard who enroll in TRICARE.

The Retired Pay Restoration Act (H.R. 303), which would permit military retirees who are rated less than 50% to receive both their VA disability compensation and their military retired pay. This would also immediately eliminate the remaining phase-out period under current law of the Disabled Veterans Tax.

For more information regarding my work in Washington and Upstate New York, please visit my official website www.arcuri.house.gov and sign up for my monthly e-newsletter.